

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE
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CONTACT: RICHARD MILLS/RICARDO REYES
(202) 395-3230**

**USTR Zoellick to Attend Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Meeting in Bangkok,
Thailand, October 17-18**

United States also Announces Telecommunications Agreement with Singapore

WASHINGTON – United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick will attend the Fifteenth Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Bangkok, Thailand, on October 17 – 18. Zoellick will meet with his Ministerial colleagues from around the Pacific to discuss ways to promote economic development and prosperity through regional and global trade liberalization.

"APEC has been an important vehicle for advancing trade liberalization, and in the wake of Cancun, such regional gatherings can provide a useful venue to discuss how to keep trade liberalization on track and moving forward," said Zoellick. "For robust trading regions like the Pacific, we will continue to explore all opportunities. I look forward to discussing with my colleagues ways to foster the regional and global economic growth that everyone needs if we are to expand jobs and promote prosperity.

"The United States will discuss with our APEC partners how best to move forward to open markets through the Doha Development Agenda as well as within APEC," Zoellick said. "In recent months the President signed free trade agreements with Singapore and Chile, and we are now in FTA negotiations with Australia."

The Ministerial Meeting will focus on expanding regional and global trade liberalization through greater transparency, reduced transaction costs for businesses, and advancing policies that will increase trade in the digital economy. Ministers will also discuss a number of other important economic issues including small business development and trade capacity building assistance.

APEC's contribution to trade liberalization will be highlighted by an agreement reached in the context of APEC's telecommunications working group, where the United States and Singapore agreed to begin mutually recognizing test data and product approvals of telecommunications equipment from each others economy. The United States and Singapore agreed to move forward with this initiative under their bilateral FTA. Singapore is the fourth APEC economy (following Chinese Taipei, Canada, and Australia) to sign such an agreement with the United States. This agreement will speed exports and lower costs for equipment suppliers, helping spur growth in a sector where U.S trade surpassed \$40

billion in 2002 (exports \$22 billion, imports \$23 billion).

Zoellick noted the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI), which President Bush announced at the APEC meetings in October, 2002, has been a useful tool to open markets in South East Asia. The EAI offers the prospect of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) between the United States and ASEAN countries that are committed to economic reforms and openness. The goal is to create a network of bilateral FTAs, which will increase trade and investment, tying more closely together our economies and our futures. The EAI initiative will encourage both bilateral and regional liberalization, and help APEC reach the Bogor goals for achieving free and open trade and investment in the Asia Pacific region. In the past year, the United States signed Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFA) with Thailand and Brunei, is negotiating a TIFA with Malaysia, and has held consultations under existing TIFAs with Indonesia and the Philippines. We are also working with Laos and Vietnam to complete their WTO accessions.

During the APEC conference, Zoellick will meet individually with ministers responsible for trade from some of the 21 APEC members. Following the Ministerial, there will be an Economic Leaders Meeting, which President Bush will attend.

APEC was started in 1989, and the other 20 members are: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Following APEC, Zoellick will travel to China. Details on his visit will be announced as they become available.

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